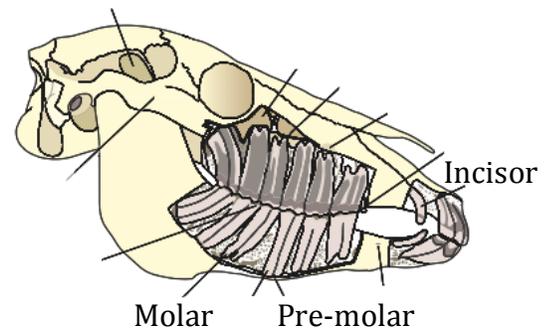


# Brief Summary of Equine Dentistry



## The Teeth:

Horses can have up to 44 teeth, however in some horses the first premolar is absent and in mares, canine teeth are often absent.

The horses pre-molars and molars (cheek teeth) are within the mandibular and maxillary sinus. Horses have hypsodont teeth that continually erupt throughout their life and lay down dentin to prevent pulp exposure.

## History of Dentistry:

Domestication of animals goes back as far as 2200 BCE. There are records that show caregivers practiced medicine on both humans and animals. In 1566 it was thought a horse only had 16 teeth because that is all that could be easily seen. It was not until the 18<sup>th</sup> Century that Veterinary schools were developed and horses teeth were taken a closer look at.

Dentistry tools have also changed with history. The first dental tools were only powered by elbow grease and sweat. Many veterinarians/equine dentists still float horses teeth solely by hand today. In the 1960's power floats (electrical dental instruments) were developed; these instruments made floating teeth easier and less time consuming. There is much debate on hand floats vs. power floats in equine dentistry but one instrument that is required for a good oral care is a speculum. This allows the veterinarian/equine dentist to visualize/treat the entire dental arcade.



## Mastication (Chewing):

A cyclical motion of the lower jaw that allows the cheek teeth (premolars and molars) to crush feed material. A horse uses its front teeth (incisors) to grasp feed with a force of 2% of their body weight, careful with your fingers! The angle of the cheek teeth and cyclical chewing motion are how points are created on the inside and outside surface of your horse's teeth. Points are a normal occurrence in horses from chewing; they can cause ulcers on the inside of the mouth. Horses teeth should be checked once a year to ensure they have proper alignment and points that are not causing them discomfort.

## Abnormal tooth alignment:

When a horse's top and bottom teeth are aligned with one another the chewing surface remains properly angled and flat. If the horse is missing a tooth, the teeth are crooked, there is an extra tooth, etc...the tooth that is not in contact with the others will grow into the empty space causing pain, ulcers, source of infection etc...

## Summary:

Equine dentistry was thought to be important when we only knew about 16 teeth in the 1500's. With advances in veterinary medicine we now know dentistry is a huge component of your horse's overall health. Dental disease has been associated with weight loss, poor hair coat, discomfort with the bit, drooling, nasal discharge, lameness and much more.

